

## FARAH KHELIL - SURFACING

Opening: March 28, 2019  
March 28 – May 11, 2019  
curated by Silvia Cirelli



From March 28 to May 11, 2019, the Officine dell'Immagine gallery in Milan is pleased to present the first Italian exhibition dedicated to Farah Khelil (Tunisia, 1980), one of the most interesting voices of the emerging contemporary scene.

Curated by Silvia Cirelli, the exhibition *Surfacing* brings together a broad selection of works never exhibited before in Italy in an attempt to explore the versatility of a young artist who continues to surprise us with her refined, incisive aesthetics, profoundly embedded in the scenarios of her inner universe. Already distinguished through her international exhibition

activities including at the British Museum in London, the Es Baluard Museum in Palma de Mallorca or the Undercurrents Projects in New York, Farah Khelil stands out for a mature stylistic grammar closely connected to strong autobiographical elements.

The different languages explored by the artist – ranging from photography, drawing, installation to video – not only demonstrate Khelil's great expressive eclecticism, but flow into an aesthetic vocabulary that sees cultural and historical memory as essential bases from which to begin to testify to the precious value of memory. Like genuine sensory experiences, Farah Khelil's works in fact represent an emotional repertoire that emerges from a process of overlapping relationships, associations and different levels of reading that come together in her attempt to understand the present through the past. There is no lack of references to art history, philosophy, or literature, which intertwine in a mosaic of confessions that puts the concept of "appropriation" at the centre of the narrative. The appropriated family portraits, as in *Notes de Chevet*; historical images of Tunisian landscapes, as in the installation *Fouilles*; the scraps of domestic fabrics such as lace or ancient cloths in the triptych *Tenir le Fil*; and the evocative bedside table *Notes de Chevet* are elements that emerge from the artist's private universe but that, little by little, guide the viewer towards a more universal reading. The urgency to become a guardian of cultural memory soon takes on a collective resonance, "contaminating" the entire body of work.

For Khelil, writing and reading symbolise important principles of communication, and it is due to their common value that we constantly find them on her narrative path. Whether in the form of a dedication on the back of a postcard (*Point of view*, listening point *Clichés II*), as an archive document of the history of the Khelil family (*Notes de Chevet*) or in the sentences engraved on slides in *Fouilles*; the written word acts as a depository for memory, an emotion, an experience and, as such, it represents a small but essential element of current cultural and social history. Standing on the metaphorical bridge between past and present, the artist projects her own cultural plot that constructs her legitimacy using the evolutionary concept of history.

### BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Farah Khelil was born in Carthage (Tunisia) in 1980. She currently lives and works between Paris and Tunis. She graduated from the Institut des Beaux-Arts in Tunis in 20017 and, in 2014, specialised with a PhD in Art and Science at the Sorbonne in Paris. Since 2010, she has been teaching Visual Arts at the Panthéon-Sorbonne Paris I. Her recent and future exhibitions include *Heartbreak* at the Palazzo Corte del Duke Sforza in Venice (2019), *The World exists to be put*

on at the British Museum in London (2019), *Mare Medi Terraneum* at the Es Baluard Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Palma de Mallorca (2015), *Un cabinet de curiosités* at the Undercurrent Projects, New York (2014), *Mapp'ing E-Fest* at the Palais Abdellia in Tunis, *Restitution* at the Centre d'Art de Port-de-Bouc of Martigues in France (2014) and the collective exhibition *Perception de la Ciutat* at the Centre Civic Fort Pienc in Barcelona (2006).